

A publisher who decided not to publish two of my books had acquired ISBN numbers for them. If I inform possible publishers of this matter, will they shy away from these two manuscripts because of what this publisher did?

Q: In 1999, I signed two contracts for two of my children's manuscripts with a small publisher. The publisher eventually returned the manuscripts to me stating that he could not publish them, due to lack of funds. In 2002, a local bookstore found my stories listed as being published. Somewhat furious, I called the publisher and asked if he published my manuscripts without my permission, after he had told me he did not have the funds to publish them. He claimed that my stories showed up in the bookstore's listing, because he had acquired ISBN numbers for both manuscripts. Nonetheless, if I inform possible publishers of this matter, will they shy away from these two manuscripts because of what this publisher did?

According to Don Sedgewick and David Bennett of Transatlantic Literary Agency, "It is a common practice to obtain ISBNs for forthcoming titles. In fact, the publisher might have gone as far as listing these two titles in a catalogue of soon-to-be-published books. Bookstores may then "load" these titles and ISBNs into their database. As a result, it "looks" as if the books have been published.

"One option is to inform any prospective publisher about these circumstances, in order to avoid a misunderstanding. However, the easier solution is to simply alter the titles slightly so that these ISBN's do not come up when the books are searched in a database. Nevertheless, a search of your name may still list the original titles, so be prepared in case there are questions." 7-8:02